

Russians Test 2 Rockets With Triple Warheads

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The Soviet Union tested two SS9 missiles, each with a triple warhead, over the weekend, the Pentagon said today.

The Soviet tests, which dropped the warheads into the Pacific south of the Aleutian Islands, were observed by U.S. officials, Pentagon press spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim said. The missiles traveled more than 5,000 nautical miles, he said.

This was the first test of the SS9 since the spring of 1969, Friedheim said.

But he characterized the tests as part of an accelerated Soviet testing program which has included some 30 launchings of offensive missiles since the beginning of the strategic arms limitation talks in Helsinki in November.

The total is about double the number of American tests of similar weapons in the same period. Less than half of the American tests involved multiple re-entry vehicles.

The SS9 is believed to be capable of delivering three independent warheads. If the warheads can be delivered with suf-

ficient accuracy, they could be used to destroy American Minuteman missiles in a surprise first strike.

Friedheim said he did not yet have enough information from the American vessels monitoring the Soviet tests to determine whether the Soviets had achieved an increase in accuracy or in an ability to guide separate warheads.

In previous tests, the Soviet re-entry vehicles apparently were not separately guided. In this sense, they differ from the warheads on the American Minuteman 3 and Poseidon missiles which can be separately guided.

Friedheim said the tests indicate the Soviet Union could be at the point where it could decide to deploy the triple warhead of the SS9 missile. But he emphasized that he did not know whether such a decision would be made.

He declined to specify what launching point the missiles have come from. In the past, tests of the SS9 have been made from the testing site at Tyuratam which is the Soviet equivalent of the Cape Kennedy launching facility.